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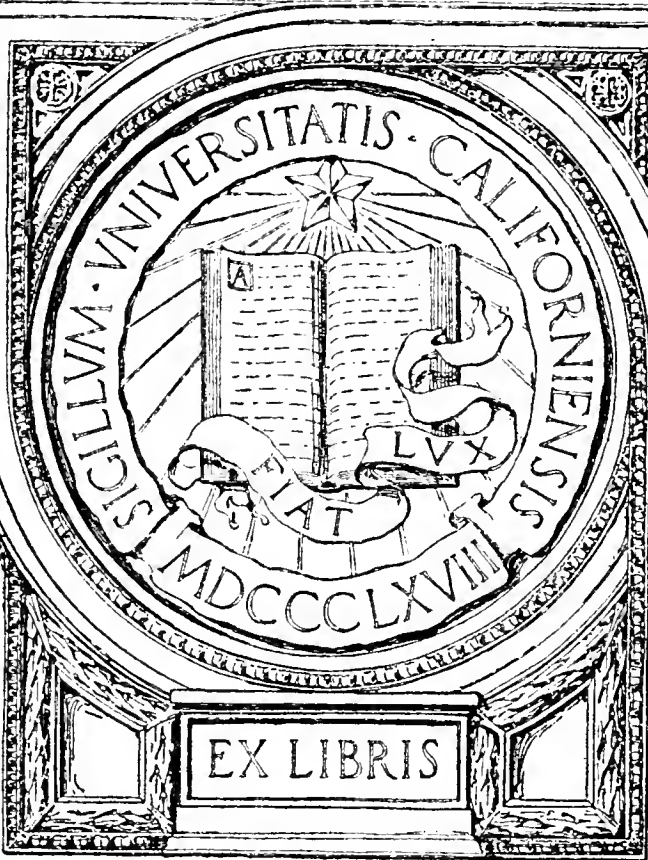
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# SOME GAINS OF THE WAR

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AN ADDRESS *to the* ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE

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*Delivered February Thirteen, Nineteen Hundred & Eighteen*

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*By* WALTER RALEIGH

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NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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# SOME GAINS OF THE WAR

AN ADDRESS  
TO THE ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE

Delivered February 13, 1918

BY  
WALTER RALEIGH

THE  
ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE  
LONDON

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## SOME GAINS OF THE WAR

OUR losses in this War continue to be enormous, and we are not yet near to the end. So it may seem absurd to speak of our gains, of gains that we have already achieved. But if you will look at the thing in a large light, I think you will see that it is not absurd.

I do not speak of gains of territory, and prisoners, and booty. It is true that we have taken from the Germans about a million square miles of land in Africa, where land is cheap. We have taken more prisoners from them than they have taken from us, and we have whole parks of German artillery to set over against the battered and broken remnants of British field-guns which were exhibited in Berlin—a monument to the immortal valour of the little old Army. I am speaking rather of gains which cannot be counted as guns are counted, or measured as land is measured, but which are none the less real and important.

The Germans have achieved certain great material gains in this War, and they are fighting now to hold them. If they fail to hold them, the Germany of the war-lords is ruined. She will have to give up all her bloated ambitions, to purge and live cleanly, and painfully to reconstruct her prosperity on a quieter and sounder basis. She will not do this until she is forced to it by defeat. No doubt there are moderate and

sensible men in Germany, as in other countries; but in Germany they are without influence, and can do nothing. War is the national industry of Prussia; Prussia has knit together the several states of the larger Germany by means of war, and has promised them prosperity and power in the future, to be achieved by war. You know the Prussian doctrine of war. Every one now knows it. According to that doctrine it is a foolish thing for a nation to wait till it is attacked. It should carefully calculate its own strength and the strength of its neighbours, and, when it is ready, it should attack them, on any pretext, suddenly, without warning, and should take from them money and land. When it has gained territory in this fashion, it should subject the population of the conquered territory to the strictest laws of military service, and so supply itself with an instrument for new and bolder aggression. This is not only the German doctrine; it is the German practice. In this way and no other modern Germany has been built up. It is a huge new State, founded on force, cemented by fear, and financed on speculative gains to be derived from the great gamble of war. You may have noticed that the German people have not been called on, as yet, to pay any considerable sum in taxation towards the expenses of this war. Those expenses (that, at least, was the original idea) were to be borne wholly by the conquered enemy. There are hundreds of thousands of Germans to-day who firmly believe that their war-lords will return in triumph from the stricken field, bringing with them the spoils of war, and scattering a largess of peace and plenty.

To us it seems a marvel that any people should ac-



cept such a doctrine, and should willingly give their lives and their fortunes to the work of carrying it out in practice; but it is not so marvellous as it seems. The German peoples are brave and obedient, and so make good soldiers; they are easily lured by the hope of profit; they are naturally attracted by the spectacular and sentimental side of war; above all, they are so curiously stupid that many of them do actually believe that they are a divinely chosen race, superior to the other races of the world. They are very carefully educated, and their education, which is ordered by the State, is part of the military machine. Their thinking is done for them by officials. It would require an extraordinary degree of courage and independence for a German youth to cut himself loose and begin thinking and judging for himself. It must always be remembered, moreover, that their recent history seems to justify their creed. I will not go back to Frederick the Great, though the history of his wars is the Prussian handbook, which teaches all the characteristic Prussian methods of treachery and deceit. But consider only the last two German wars. How, in the face of these, can it be proved to any German that war is not the most profitable of adventures? In 1866 Prussia had war with Austria. The war lasted forty days, and Prussia had from five to six thousand soldiers killed in action. As a consequence of the war Prussia gained much territory, and established her control over the states of greater Germany. In 1870 she had war with France. Her total casualties in that war were approximately a hundred thousand, just about the same as our casualties in Gallipoli. From the war she gained, besides

a great increase of strength at home, the rich provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, with all their mineral wealth, and an indemnity of two hundred million pounds, that is to say, four times the actual cost of the war in money. How then can it be maintained that war is not good business? If you say so to any Prussian, he thinks you are talking like a child.

Not only were these two wars rich in profit for the Germans, but they did not lose them much esteem. There was sympathy in this country for the union of the German peoples, just as there was sympathy, a few years earlier, for the union of the various states of Italy. There was not a little admiration for German efficiency and strength. So that Bismarck, who was an expert in all the uses of bullying, blackmail, and fraud, was accepted as a great European statesman. I have always believed, and I still believe, that Germany will have to pay a heavy price for Bismarck—all the heavier because the payment has been so long deferred.

The present War, then, is in the direct line of succession to these former wars; it was planned by Germany, elaborately and deliberately planned, on a calculation of the profits to be derived from operations on a large scale.

Well, as I said, we, as a people, do not believe in gambling in human misery to attain uncertain speculative gains. We hold that war can be justified only by a good cause, not by a lucky event. The German doctrine seems to us impious and wicked. Though we have defined our war aims in detail, and the Germans have not dared publicly to define theirs, our real and sufficient war aim is to break the monstrous and in-

human doctrine and practice of the enemy—to make their calculations miscarry. And observe, if their calculations miscarry, they have fought and suffered for nothing. They entered into this War for profit, and in the conduct of the War, though they have made many mistakes, they have made none of those generous and magnanimous mistakes which redeem and beautify a losing cause.

The essence of our cause, and its greatest strength, is that we are not fighting for profit. We are fighting for no privilege except the privilege of possessing our souls, of being ourselves—a privilege which we claim also for other weaker nations. The inestimable strength of that position is that if the odds are against us it does not matter. If you see a ruffian torturing a child, and interfere to prevent him, do you feel that your attempt was a wrong one because he knocks you down? And if you succeed, what material profit is there in saving a child from torture? We have sometimes fought in the past for doubtful causes and for wrong causes, but this time there is no mistake. Our cause is better than we deserve; we embraced it by an act of faith, and it is only by continuing in that faith that we shall see it through. The little old Army, when they went to France in August 1914, did not ask what profits were likely to come their way. They knew that there were none, but they were willing to sacrifice themselves to save decency and humanity from being trampled in the mud. This was the Army that the Germans called a mercenary Army, and its epitaph has been written by a good poet:

These, in the day when heaven was falling,  
The hour when earth's foundations fled,

Followed their mercenary calling,  
And took their wages, and are dead.  
Their shoulders held the heavens suspended,  
They stood, and earth's foundations stay,  
What God abandoned these defended,  
And saved the sum of things for pay.

We must follow their example, for we shall never get a better. We must not make too much of calculation, especially when it deals with incalculable things. Nervous public critics, like Mr. H. G. Wells, are always calling out for more cleverness in our methods, for new and effective tricks, so that we may win the War. I would never disparage cleverness; the more you can get of it, the better; but it is useless unless it is in the service of something stronger and greater than itself, and that is character. Cleverness can grasp; it is only character that can hold. The Duke of Wellington was not a clever man; he was a man of simple and honourable mind, with an infinite capacity for patience, persistence, and endurance, so that neither unexpected reverses abroad nor a flood of idle criticism at home could shake him or change him. So he bore a chief part in laying low the last great tyranny that desolated Europe.

None of our great wars was won by cleverness; they were all won by resolution and perseverance. In all of them we were near to despair and did not despair. In all of them we won through to victory in the end.

But in none of them did victory come in the expected shape. The worst of making elaborate plans of victory, and programmes of all that is to follow victory, is that the mixed event is sure to defeat those plans. Not every war finds its decision in a single great battle. Think of our war with Spain in the sixteenth century.

Spain was then the greatest of European Powers. She had larger armies than we could raise; she had more than our wealth, and more than our shipping. The newly discovered continent of America was an appanage of Spain, and her great galleons were wafted lazily to and fro, bringing her all the treasures of the western hemisphere. We defeated her by standing out and holding on. We fought her in the Low Countries, which she enslaved and oppressed. We refused to recognize her exclusive rights in America, and our merchant seamen kept the sea undaunted, as they have kept it for the last three years. When at last we became an intolerable vexation to Spain, she collected a great Armada, or war-fleet, to invade and destroy us; and it was shattered, by the winds of heaven and the sailors of England, in 1588. The defeat of the Armada was the turning-point of the war, but it was not the end. It lifted a great shadow of fear from the hearts of the people, as a great shadow of fear has already been lifted from their hearts in the present War, but during the years that followed we suffered many and serious reverses at the hand of Spain, before peace and security were reached. So late as 1601, thirteen years after the defeat of the Armada, the King of Denmark offered to mediate between England and Spain, so that the long and disastrous war might be ended. Queen Elizabeth was then old and frail, but this was what she said—and if you want to understand why she was almost adored by her people, listen to her words: ‘I would have the King of Denmark, and all Princes Christian and Heathen to know, that England hath no need to crave peace; nor myself endured one hour’s fear since I attained the crown thereof, being guarded

with so valiant and faithful subjects.' In the end the power and menace of Spain faded away, and when peace was made, in 1604, this nation never again, from that day to this, feared the worst that Spain could do.

What were our gains from the war with Spain? Freedom to live our lives in our own way, unthreatened; freedom to colonize America. The gains of a great war are never visible immediately; they are deferred, and extended over many years. What did we gain by our war with Napoleon, which ended in the victory of Waterloo? For long years after Waterloo this country was full of riots and discontents; there were rick-burnings, agitations, popular risings, and something very near to famine in the land. But all these things, from a distance, are now seen to have been the broken water that follows the passage of a great storm. The real gains of Waterloo, and still more of Trafalgar, are evident in the enormous commercial and industrial development of England during the nineteenth century, and in the peaceful foundation of the great dominions of Canada, Australia, and South Africa, which was made possible only by our unchallenged use of the seas. The men who won those two great battles did not live to gather the fruits of their victory; but their children did. If we defeat Germany as completely as we hope, we shall not be able to point at once to our gains. But it is not a rash forecast to say that our children and children's children will live in greater security and freedom than we have ever tasted.

A man must have a good and wide imagination if he is to be willing to face wounds and death for the sake of his unborn descendants and kinsfolk. We cannot count on the popular imagination being equal to the



task. Fortunately, there is a substitute for imagination which does the work as well or better, and that is character. Our people are sound in instinct; they understand a fight. They know that a wrestler who considers, while he is in the grip of his adversary, whether he would not do well to give over, and so put an end to the weariness and the strain, is no sort of a wrestler. They have never failed under a strain of this kind, and they will not fail now. The people who do the half-hearted and timid talking are either young egotists, who are angry at being deprived of their personal ease and independence; or elderly pensive gentlemen, in public offices and clubs, who are no longer fit for action, and, being denied action, fall into melancholy; or feverish journalists, who live on the proceeds of excitement, who feel the pulse and take the temperature of the War every morning, and then rush into the street to announce their fluttering hopes and fears; or cosmopolitan philosophers, to whom the change from London to Berlin means nothing but a change in diet and a pleasant addition to their opportunities of hearing good music; or aliens in heart, to whom the historic fame of England, 'dear for her reputation through the world,' is less than nothing; or practical jokers, who are calm and confident enough themselves, but delight in startling and depressing others. These are not the people of England; they are the parasites of the people of England. The people of England understand a fight.

That brings me to the first great gain of the War. We have found ourselves. Which of us, in the early months of 1914, would have dared to predict the splendours of the youth of this Empire—splendours

which are now a part of our history? We are adepts at self-criticism and self-depreciation. We hate the language of emotion. Some of us, if we were taken to heaven and asked what we thought of it, would say that it is decent, or not so bad. I suppose we are jealous to keep our standard high, and to have something to say if a better place should be found. But in spite of all this, we do now know, and it is worth knowing, that we are not weaker than our fathers. We know that the people who inhabit these islands and this commonwealth of nations cannot be pushed on one side, or driven under, or denied a great share in the future ordering of the world. We know this, and our knowledge of it is the debt that we owe to our dead. It is not vanity to admit that we know it; on the contrary, it would be vanity to pretend that we do not know it. It is visible to other eyes than ours. Some time ago I heard an address given by a friend of mine, an Indian Mohammedan of warrior descent, to University students of his own faith. He was urging on them the futility of dreams and the necessity of self-discipline and self-devotion. 'Why do the people of this country', he said, 'count for so much all the world over? It is not because of their dreams; it is because thousands of them are lying at the bottom of the sea.'

Further, we have not only found ourselves; we have found one another. A new kindliness has grown up, during the War, between people divided by the barriers of class, or wealth, or circumstance. A statesman of the seventeenth century remarks that *It is a Misfortune for a Man not to have a Friend in the World, but for that reason he shall have no Enemy*. I might invert his maxim and say, *It is a Misfortune for a Man to have*

*many Enemies, but for that reason he shall know who are his Friends.* No Radical member of Parliament will again, while any of us live, cast contempt on 'the carpet Captains of Mayfair'. No idle Tory talker will again dare to say that the working men of England care nothing for their country. Even the manners of railway travel have improved. I was travelling in a third-class compartment of a crowded train the other day; we were twenty in the compartment, but it seemed a pity to leave any one behind, and we made room for number twenty-one. Nothing but a very kindly human feeling could have packed us tight enough for this. Yet now is the time that has been chosen by some of these pensive gentlemen that I spoke of, and by some of these excitable journalists, to threaten us with class-war, and to try to make our flesh creep by conjuring up the horrors of revolution. I advise them to take their opinions to the third-class compartment and discuss them there. It is a good tribunal, for, sooner or later, you will find every one there—even officers, when they are travelling in mufti at their own expense. I have visited this tribunal very often, and I have always come away from it with the same impression, that this people means to win the War. But I do not travel much in the North of England, so I asked a friend of mine, whose dealings are with the industrial North, what the work-people of Lancashire and Yorkshire think of the War. He said, 'Their view is very simple: they mean to win it; and they mean to make as much money out of it as ever they can.' Certainly, that is very simple; but before you judge them, put yourselves in their place. There are great outcries against profiteers, for making exorbitant profits out of the War, and against

munition workers, for delaying work in order to get higher wages. I do not defend either of them; they are unimaginative and selfish, and I do not care how severely they are dealt with; but I do say that the majority of them are not wicked in intention. A good many of the more innocent profiteers are men whose sin is that they take an offer of two shillings rather than an offer of eighteenpence for what cost them one and a penny. Some of us, in our weaker moments, might be betrayed into doing the same. As for the munition workers, I remember what Goldsmith, who had known the bitterest poverty, wrote to his brother. 'Avarice', he said, 'in the lower orders of mankind is true ambition; avarice is the only ladder the poor can use to preferment. Preach then, my dear Sir, to your son, not the excellence of human nature nor the disrespect of riches, but endeavour to teach him thrift and economy. Let his poor wandering uncle's example be placed in his eyes. I had learned from books to love virtue before I was taught from experience the necessity of being selfish.'

The profiteers and the munition workers are endeavouring, incidentally, to better their own position. But make no mistake; the bulk of these people would rather die than allow one spire of English grass to be trodden under the foot of a foreign trespasser. Their chief sin is that they do not fear. They think that there is plenty of time to do a little business for themselves on the way to defeat the enemy. I cannot help remembering the mutiny at the Nore, which broke out in our fleet during the Napoleonic wars. The mutineers struck for more pay and better treatment, but they agreed together that if the French fleet should put in an appearance during the mutiny, all their claims

should be postponed for a time, and the French fleet should have their first attention.

Employers and employed do, no doubt, find in some trades to-day that their relations are strained and irksome. They would do well to take a lesson from the Army, where, with very few exceptions, there is harmony and understanding between those who take orders and those who give them. It is only in the Army that you can see realized the ideal of ancient Rome.

Then none was for a party,  
Then all were for the State;  
Then the great man helped the poor,  
And the poor man loved the great.

Why is the Army so far superior to most commercial and industrial businesses? The secret does not lie in State employment. There is plenty of discontent and unrest among the State-employed railway men and munition workers. It lies rather in the habit of mutual help and mutual trust. If any civilian employer of labour wants to have willing workpeople, let him take a hint from the Army. Let him live with his workpeople, and share all their dangers and discomforts. Let him take thought for their welfare before his own, and teach self-sacrifice by example. Let him put the good of the nation before all private interests; and those whom he commands will do for him anything that he asks.

I cannot believe that the benefits which have come to us from the Army will pass away with the passing of the War. Those who have been comrades in danger will surely take with them something of the old spirit into civil life. And those who have kept clear of the

**Army** in order to carry on their own trades and businesses will surely realize that they have missed the great opportunity of their lives.

In a wider sense the War has brought us to an understanding of one another. This great Commonwealth of independent nations which is called the British Empire is scattered over the surface of the habitable globe. It embraces people who live ten thousand miles apart, and whose ways of life are so different that they might seem to have nothing in common. But the War has brought them together, and has done more than half a century of peace could do to promote a common understanding. Hundreds of thousands of men of our blood who, before the War, had never seen this little island, have now made acquaintance with it. Hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of this island to whom the Dominions were strange, far places, if, after the War, they should be called on to settle there, will not feel that they are leaving home. I can only hope that the Canadians and Anzacs think as well of us as we do of them. We do not like to praise our friends in their hearing, so I will say no more than this: I am told that a new kind of peerage, very haughty and very self-important, has arisen in South London. Its members are those householders who have been privileged to have Anzac soldiers billeted on them. It is private ties of this kind, invisible to the constitutional lawyer and the political historian, which make the fine meshes of the web of Empire.

Because he knew that the strength of the whole texture depends on the strength of the fine meshes, Earl Grey, who died last year, will always be remem-



bered in our history. Not many men have his opportunity to make acquaintance with the domain that is their birthright, for he had administered a province of South Africa, and had been Governor-General of Canada. He rediscovered the glory of the Empire, as poets rediscover the glory of common speech. 'He had breathed its air,' a friend of his says, 'fished its rivers, walked in its valleys, stood on its mountains, met its people face to face. He had seen it in all the zones of the world. He knew what it meant to mankind. Under the British flag, wherever he journeyed, he found men of English speech living in an atmosphere of liberty and carrying on the dear domestic traditions of the British Isles. He saw justice firmly planted there, industry and invention hard at work unfettered by tyrants of any kind, domestic life prospering in natural conditions, and our old English kindness and cheerfulness and broad-minded tolerance keeping things together. But he also saw room under that same flag, ample room, for millions and millions more of the human race. The Empire wasn't a word to him. It was a vast, an almost boundless, home for honest men.'

The War did not dishearten him. When he died, in August, 1917, he said, 'Here I lie on my death-bed, looking clear into the Promised Land. I'm not allowed to enter it, but there it is before my eyes. After the War the people of this country will enter it, and those who laughed at me for a dreamer will see that I wasn't so wrong after all. But there's still work to do for those who didn't laugh, hard work, and with much opposition in the way; all the same, it is work right up against the goal. My dreams have come true.'

One of the clear gains of the War is to be found in

the increased activity and alertness of our own people. The motto of to-day is, 'Let those now work who never worked before, And those who always worked now work the more.' Before the War we had a great national reputation for idleness—in this island, at least. I remember a friendly critic from Canada who, some five or six years ago, expressed to me, with much disquiet, his opinion that there was something very far wrong with the old country; that we had gone soft. As for our German critics, they expressed the same view in gross and unmistakable fashion. Wit is not a native product in Germany, it all has to be imported, so they could not satirize us; but their caricatures of the typical Englishman showed us what they thought. He was a young weakling with a foolish face, and was dressed in cricketing flannels. It would have been worth their while to notice what they did not notice, that his muscles and nerves are not soft. They learned that later, when the bank-clerks of Manchester broke the Prussian Guard into fragments at Contalmaison. This must have been a sad surprise, for the Germans had always taught, in their delightful authoritative fashion, that the chief industries of the young Englishman are lawn-tennis and afternoon tea. They are a fussy people, and they find it difficult to understand the calm of the man who, having nothing to do, does it. Perhaps they were right, and we were too idle. The disease was never so serious as they thought it, and now, thanks to them, we are in a fair way to recovery. The idle classes have turned their hand to the lathe and the plough. Women are doing a hundred things that they never did before, and are doing them well. The elasticity and resourcefulness that the War has developed

will not be lost or destroyed by the coming of peace. Least of all will those qualities be lost if we should prove unable, in this War, to impose our own terms on Germany. Then the peace that follows will be a long struggle, and in that struggle we shall prevail. In the last long peace we were not suspicious; we felt friendly enough to the Germans, and we gave them every advantage. They despised us for our friendliness and used the peace to prepare our downfall. That will never happen again. If we cannot tame the cunning animal that has assaulted humanity, at least we can and will tether him. Laws will not be necessary; there are millions of others besides the seamen of England who will have no dealings with an unsubdued and unrepentant Germany. What the Germans are not taught by the War they will have to learn in the more tedious and no less costly school of peace.

In any case, whether we win through to real peace and real security, or whether we are thrown back on an armed peace and the duty of unbroken vigilance, we shall be dependent for our future on the children who are now learning in the schools or playing in the streets. It is a good dependence. The children of to-day are better than the children whom I knew when I was a child. I think they have more intelligence and sympathy; they certainly have more public spirit. We cannot do too much for them. The most that we can do is nothing to what they are going to do for us, for their own nation and people. I am not concerned to discuss the education problem. Formal education, carried on chiefly by means of books, is a very small part of the making of a man or a woman. But I am interested to know what the children are thinking.

You cannot fathom a child's thoughts, but we know who are their best teachers, and what lessons have been stamped indelibly on their minds. Their teachers, whom they never saw, and whose lessons they will never forget, lie in graves in Flanders and France and Gallipoli and Syria and Mesopotamia, or unburied at the bottom of the sea. The runner falls, but the torch is carried forward. This is what Julian Grenfell, who gave his mind and his life to the War, has said in his splendid poem called *Into Battle*:

And life is colour and warmth and light,  
And a striving evermore for these;  
And he is dead who will not fight,  
And who dies fighting hath increase.

Those who died fighting will have such increase that a whole new generation, better even than the old, will be ready, no long time hence, to uphold and extend and decorate the Commonwealth of nations which their fathers and brothers saved from ruin.

One thing I have never heard discussed, but it is the clearest gain of all, and already it may be called a certain gain. After the War the English language will have such a position as it has never had before. It will be established in world-wide security. Even before the War, it may be truly said, our language was in no danger from the competition of the German language. The Germans have never had much success in the attempt to get their language adopted by other peoples. Not all the military laws of Prussia can drive out French from the hearts and homes of the people of Alsace. In the ports of the near and far East you will hear English spoken—pidgin English, as it is called,

that is to say, a selection of English words suited for the business of daily life. But you may roam the world over, and you will hear no pidgin German. Before the War many Germans learned English, while very few English-speaking people learned German. In other matters we disagreed, but we both knew which way the wind was blowing. It may be said, and said truly, that our well-known laziness was one cause of our failing or neglecting to learn German. But it was not the only cause; and we are not lazy in tasks which we believe to be worth our while. Rather we had an instinctive belief that the future does not belong to the German tongue. That belief is not likely to be impaired by the War. Armed ruffians can do some things, but one thing they cannot do; they cannot endear their language to those who have suffered from their violence. The Germans poisoned the wells in South-West Africa; in Europe they did all they could to poison the wells of mutual trust and mutual understanding among civilized men. Do they think that these things will make a good advertisement for the explosive guttural sounds and the huddled deformed syntax of the speech in which they express their arrogance and their hate? Which of the chief European languages will come first, after the War, with the little nations? Will Serbia be content to speak German? Will Norway and Denmark feel a new affection for the speech of the men who have degraded the old humanity of the seas? Neighbourhood, kinship, and the necessities of commerce may retain for the German language a certain measure of custom in Sweden and Switzerland, and in Holland. But for the most part Germans will have to be content to be addressed in their own tongue only by

those who fear them, or by those who hope to cheat them.

This gain, which I make bold to predict for the English language, is a real gain, apart from all patriotic bias. The English language is incomparably richer, more fluid, and more vital than the German language. Where the German has but one way of saying a thing, we have two or three, each with its distinctions and its subtleties of usage. Our capital wealth is greater, and so are our powers of borrowing. English sprang from the old Teutonic stock, and we can still coin new words, such as 'food-hoard' and 'joy-ride', in the German fashion. But long centuries ago we added thousands of Romance words, words which came into English through the French or Norman-French, and brought with them the ideas of Latin civilization and of mediæval Christianity. Later on, when the renewed study of Latin and Greek quickened the intellectual life of Europe, we imported thousands of Greek and Latin words direct from the ancient world, learned words, many of them, suitable for philosophers, or for writers who pride themselves on shooting a little above the vulgar apprehension. Yet many of these, too, have found their way into daily speech, so that we can say most things in three ways, according as we draw on one or another of the three main sources of our speech. Thus, you can Begin, or Commence, or Initiate an undertaking, with Boldness, or Courage, or Resolution. If you are a Workman, or Labourer, or Operative, you can Ask, or Request, or Solicit your employer to Yield, or Grant, or Concede, an increase in the Earnings, or Wages, or Remuneration which fall to the lot of your Fellow, or Companion, or Associate. Your employer



is perhaps Old, or Veteran, or Superannuated, which may Hinder, or Delay, or Retard the success of your application. But if you Foretell, or Prophecy, or Predict that the War will have an End, or Close, or Termination that shall not only be Speedy, or Rapid, or Accelerated, but also Great, or Grand, or Magnificent, you may perhaps Stir, or Move, or Actuate him to have Ruth, or Pity, or Compassion on your Mate, or Colleague, or Collaborator.

The English language, then, is a language of great wealth—much greater wealth than can be illustrated by any brief example. But wealth is nothing unless you can use it. The real strength of English lies in the inspired freedom and variety of its syntax. There is no grammar of the English speech which is not comic in its stiffness and inadequacy. An English grammar does not explain all that we can do with our speech; it merely explains what shackles and restraints we must put upon our speech if we would bring it within the comprehension of a school-bred grammarian. But the speech itself is like the sea, and soon breaks down the dykes built by the inland engineer. It was the fashion, in the eighteenth century, to speak of the divine Shakespeare. The reach and catholicity of his imagination was what earned him that extravagant praise; but his syntax has no less title to be called divine. It is not cast or wrought, like metal; it leaps like fire, and moves like air. So is every one that is born of the spirit. Our speech is our great charter. Far better than in the long constitutional process whereby we subjected our kings to law, and gave dignity and strength to our Commons, the meaning of English freedom is to be seen in the ilimitable freedom of our English speech.

Our literature is almost as rich as our language. Modern German literature begins in the eighteenth century. Modern English literature began with Chaucer, in the fourteenth century, and has been full of great names and great books ever since. Nothing has been done in German literature for which we have not a counterpart, done as well or better—except the work of Heine, and Heine was a Jew. His opinion of the Prussians was that they are a compost of beer, deceit, and sand. French literature and English literature can be compared, throughout their long course, sometimes to the great advantage of the French. German literature cannot seriously be compared with either.

It may be objected that literature and art are ornamental affairs, which count for little in the deadly strife of nations. But that is not so. Our language cannot go anywhere without taking our ideas and our creed with it, not to mention our institutions and our games. If the Germans could understand what Chaucer means when he says of his Knight that

he lovèd chivalry,  
Truth and honoûr, freedom and courtesy,

then indeed we might be near to an understanding. I asked a good German scholar the other day what is the German word for 'fair play'. He replied, as they do in Parliament, that he must ask for notice of that question. I fear there is no German word for 'fair play'.

The little countries, the pawns and victims of German policy, understand our ideas better. The peoples who have suffered from tyranny and oppression look to England for help, and it is a generous weakness in

us that we sometimes deceive them by our sympathy, for our power is limited, and we cannot help them all. But it will not count against us at the final reckoning that in most places where humanity has suffered cruelty and indignity the name of England has been invoked: not always in vain.

And now, for I have kept to the last what I believe to be the greatest gain of all, the entry of America into the War assures the triumph of our common language. America is peopled by many races; only a minority of the inhabitants—an influential and governing minority—are of the English stock. But here, again, the language carries it; and the ideas that inspire America are ideas which had their origin in the long English struggle for freedom. Our sufferings in this War are great, but they are not so great that we cannot recognize virtue in a new recruit to the cause. No nation, in the whole course of human history, has ever made a more splendid decision, or performed a more magnanimous act, than America, when she decided to enter this War. She had nothing to gain, for, to say the bare truth, she had little to lose. If Germany were to dominate the world, America, no doubt, would be ruined; but in all human likelihood, Germany's impious attempt would have spent itself and been broken long before it reached the coasts of America. America might have stood out of the War in the assurance that her own interests were safe, and that, when the tempest had passed, the centre of civilization would be transferred from a broken and exhausted Europe to a peaceful and prosperous America. Some few Americans talked in this strain, and favoured a decision in this sense. But it was not for nothing that America was

founded upon religion. When she saw humanity in anguish, she did not pass by on the other side. Her entry into the War has put an end, I hope for ever, to the family quarrel, not very profound or significant, which for a century and a half has been a jarring note in the relations of mother and daughter. And it has put an end to another danger. It seemed at one time not unlikely that the English language as it is spoken overseas would set up a life of its own, and become separated from the language of the old country. A development of this kind would be natural enough. The Boers of South Africa speak Dutch, but not the Dutch spoken in Holland. The French Canadians speak French, but not the French of Molière. Half a century ago, when America was exploring and settling her own country, in wild and lone places, her pioneers enriched the English speech with all kinds of new and vivid phrases. The tendency was then for America to go her own way, and to cultivate what is new in language at the expense of what is old. She prided herself even on having a spelling of her own, and seemed almost willing to break loose from tradition and to coin a new American English.

This has not happened; and now, I think, it will not happen. For one thing, the American colonists left us when already we had a great literature. Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser belong to America no less than to us, and America has never forgotten them. The education which has been fostered in American schools and colleges keeps the whole nation in touch with the past. Some of their best authors write in a style that Milton and Burke would understand and approve. There is no more beautiful English prose

than Nathaniel Hawthorne's. The best speeches of Abraham Lincoln, and, we may truly add, of President Wilson, are merely classic English. During my own lifetime I am sure I have seen the speech usages of the two peoples draw closer together. For one thing, we on this side now borrow, and borrow very freely, the more picturesque colloquialisms of America. On informal occasions I sometimes brighten my own speech with phrases which I think I owe to one of the best of living American authors, Mr. George Ade, of Chicago, the author of *Fables in Slang*. The press, the telegraph, the telephone, and the growing habit of travel bind us closer together every year; and the English that we speak, however rich and various it may be, is going to remain one and the same English, our common inheritance.

One question, the most important and difficult of all, remains to be asked. Will this War, in its course and in its effects, tend to prevent or discourage later wars? If the gains that it brings prove to be merely partial and national gains, if it exalts one nation by unjustly depressing another, and conquers cruelty by equal cruelty, then nothing can be more certain than that the peace of the world is farther off than ever. When she was near her death, Edith Cavell, patriot and martyr, said that patriotism is not enough. Every one who thinks on international affairs knows this; almost every one forgets it in time of war. What can be done to prevent nations from appealing to the wild justice of revenge?

A League of Nations may do good, but I am surprised that any one who has imagination and a knowledge of the facts should entertain high hopes of it as a

full solution. There is a League of Nations to-day which has given a verdict against the Central Powers, and that verdict is being enforced by the most terrible War in all human history. If the verdict had been given before the War began, it may be said, then Germany might have accepted it, and refrained. So she might, but what then? She would have felt herself wronged; she would have deferred the War, and, in ways that she knows so well, would have set about making a party for herself among the nations of the League. Who can be confident that she would have failed either to divide her judges, or to accumulate such elements of strength that she might dare to defy them? A League of Nations would work well only if its verdicts were loyally accepted by all the nations composing it. To make majority-rule possible you must have a community made up of members who are reasonably well informed upon one another's affairs, and who are bound together by a tie of loyalty stronger and more enduring than their causes of difference. It would be a happy thing if the nations of the world made such a community; and the sufferings of this War have brought them nearer to desiring it. But those who believe that such a community can be formed to-day or to-morrow are too sanguine. It must not be forgotten that the very principle of the League, if its judgments are to take effect, involves a world-war in cases where a strong minority resists those judgements. Every war would become a world-war. Perhaps this very fact would prevent wars, but it cannot be said that experience favours such a conclusion.

There is no escape for us by way of the Gospels. The Gospel precept to turn the other cheek to the aggressor



was not addressed to a meeting of trustees. Christianity has never shirked war, or even much disliked it. Where the whole soul is set on things unseen, wounds and death become of less account. And if the Christians have not helped us to avoid war, how should the pacifists be of use? Those of them whom I happen to know, or to have met, have shown themselves, in the relations of civil life, to be irritable, self-willed, combative creatures, where the average soldier is calm, unselfish, and placable. There is something incongruous and absurd in the pacifist of British descent. He has fighting in his blood, and when his creed, or his nervous sensibility to physical horrors, denies him the use of fighting, his blood turns sour. He can argue, and object, and criticize, but he cannot lead. All that he can offer us in effect is eternal quarrels in place of occasional fights.

No one can do anything to prevent war who does not recognize its splendour, for it is by its splendour that it keeps its hold on humanity, and persists. The wickedest and most selfish war in the world is not fought by wicked and selfish soldiers. The spirit of man is immense, and for an old memory, a pledged word, a sense of fellowship, offers this frail and complicated tissue of flesh and blood, which a pin or a grain of sand will disorder, to be the victim of all the atrocities that the wit of man can compound out of fire and steel and poison. If that spirit is to be changed, or directed into new courses, it must be by one who understands it, and approaches it reverently, with bared head.

The best hope seems to me to lie in paying chief attention to the improvement of war rather than to its abolition; to the decencies of the craft; to the style

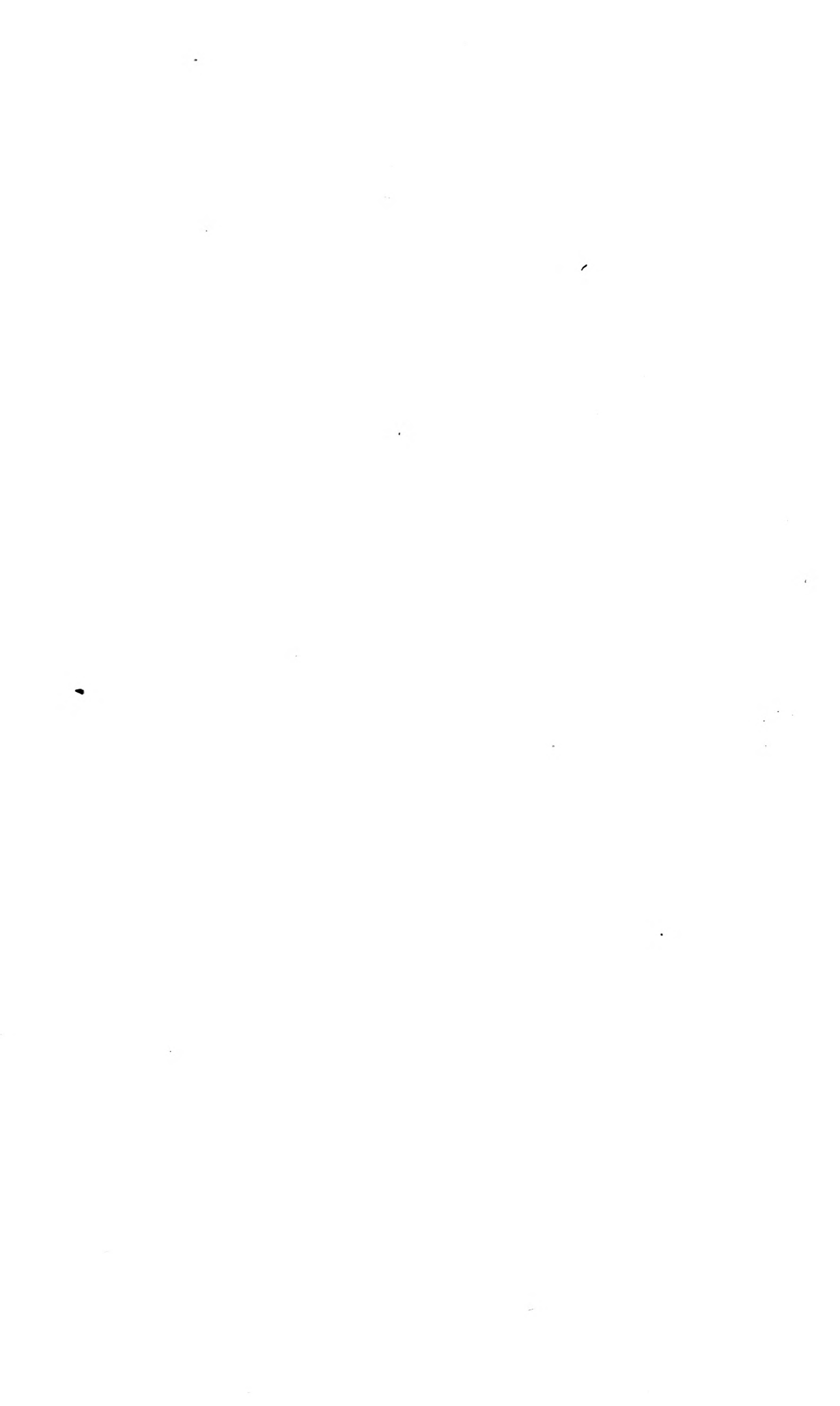
rather than the matter. Style is often more important than matter, and this War would not have been so fierce or so prolonged if it had not become largely a war on a point of style, a war, that is to say, to determine the question how war should be waged. If the Germans had behaved humanely and considerately to the civil population of Belgium, if they had kept their solemn promise not to use poison-gas, if they had refrained from murder at sea, if their valour had been accompanied by chivalry, the War might now have been ended, perhaps not in their disfavour, for it would not have been felt, as it now is felt, that they must be defeated at no matter how great a cost, or civilization will perish.

Even as things are, there have been some gains in the manner of conducting war, which, when future generations look back on them, will be seen to be considerable. It is true that modern science has devised new and appalling weapons. The invention of a new weapon in war always arouses protest, but it does not usually, in the long run, make war more inhuman. There was a great outcry in Europe when the broadsword was superseded by the rapier, and a tall man of his hands could be spitted like a cat or a rabbit by any dexterous little fellow with a trained wrist. There was a wave of indignation, which was a hundred years in passing, when musketry first came into use, and a man-at-arms of great prowess could be killed from behind a wall by one who would not have dared to meet him in open combat. But these changes did not, in effect, make war crueller or more deadly. They gave more play to intelligence, and abolished the tyranny of the bully, who took the wall of every man he met, and made him-

self a public nuisance. The introduction of poison-gas, which is a small thing compared with the invention of fire-arms, has given the chemist a place in the ranks of fighting-men. And if science has lent its aid to the destruction of life, it has spent greater zeal and more prolonged effort on the saving of life. No previous war will compare with this in care for the wounded and maimed. In all countries, and on all fronts, an army of skilled workers devote themselves to this single end. I believe that this quickening of the human conscience, for that is what it is, will prove to be the greatest gain of the War, and the greatest advance made in restraint of war. If the nations come to recognize that their first duty, and their first responsibility, is to those who give so much in their service, that recognition will of itself do more than can be done by any conclave of statesmen to discourage war. It was the monk Telemachus, according to the old story, who stopped the gladiatorial games at Rome, and was stoned by the people. If war, in process of time, shall be abolished, or, failing that, shall be governed by the codes of humanity and chivalry, like a decent tournament; then the one sacrificial figure which will everywhere be honoured for the change will be the figure not of a priest or a politician, but of a hospital nurse.

THE  
GAINS OF  
THE WAR





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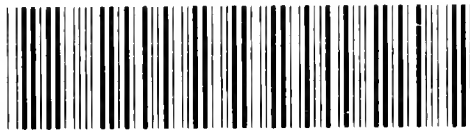
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